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Into "The Quest," which he has been twenty years in bringing to completion, Dr van Eeden has crammed most of his thoughts about most of the multifarious subjects which have interested him during this long period. It contains a good deal of Pantheism, a good deal of non-resistant Anarchism, a dash of Spiritism, and, by way of social prophecy, a stilted, unengaging Utopia. It reeks with allegories, parables, apologues, dreams, visions, telepathic manifestations and trances. Some of its characters are wholly human, others wholly superhuman, and still others alternately human and superhuman. Altogether it is a bizarre and bewildering collocation of the normal and the abnormal, the natural and the miraculous, the real and the ideal.

A mixture of this sort may possess a savory unity for the peoples of certain countries, as does the fearfully and wonderfully made *bouillabaisse* for the Marseillais; but it is very much to be doubted whether the United States is one of these countries. However little Latin we may be in most other respects, we Americans are unequivocally Latin in this that we can develop little enthusiasm for that literature of deliberate and wilful obscurity which they have labelled in Paris "the fog of the North."

"The Quest," therefore, is scarcely calculated to create a cult for Dutch letters in this country. And if Dr. van Eeden and the new school of which he is the acknowledged head are really all that their admirers claim them to be, it is greatly to be regretted that we should be forced to judge him and it by a work which is so distinctly antipathetic to our national temperament.

ALVAN F. SANBORN.

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"RALPH WALDO EMERSON."\*

THE brief monograph on Emerson which Professor George Edward Woodberry has contributed to the English Men of Letters Series is more serviceable to the student than any previous biography or criticism, because it expounds Emerson from the inside out instead of from the outside in. Biographers and critics hitherto have rambled all around the circumference of Emerson, with eyes lured wondering toward his shining centre;

\* "Ralph Waldo Emerson." By George Edward Woodberry. English Men of Letters Series. New York and London: The Macmillan Company. 1907.

but Professor Woodberry pierces to the centre of the poet's mind and thence looks forth with thought that radiates. His biography is not a record of works and days; it is not a pleasant assemblage of personalities; it is the natural history of a great mind, the exposition of a beautiful soul. Only four pages are used to summarize the events of seventeen years, from the close of the Civil War to Emerson's death in 1882: the method of this biography is not narrative but expository. Rare indeed in literature is the understanding of one mind by another; yet in this book the understanding seems complete. We are taken into the mind of Emerson; we live in it, and feel it grow, and with it yearn into expression. Emerson's thought has never before been so clearly and completely exhibited; and therefore this brief critical biography supplants all its predecessors in the field.

It supplants them all, in spite of the fact that it is abstract, whereas Cabot's (for example) is concrete, and impersonal, whereas Holmes's (for example) is personal. The understanding of Emerson's mind that we derive from it, abstract and impersonal though it be, explains to us for the first time many things. It explains that inability of Emerson's to sympathize with other modes of thinking than his own which kept him isolate, in spite of his amiability and his determined and continued effort to engage in the workaday concerns of his fellow townsmen. It explains why Emerson, although he was the very incarnation of New England Transcendentalism, remained perforce aloof from the practical reforms attempted by his fellow Transcendentalists. It explains his incapacity for ordinary human friendship, his lack of reverence for historical authority, and his underestimate of art and science. It explains that essential subjectivity of Emerson's poems which, more than his defective utterance in verse, has kept them illegible to the casual man. It explains for the first time adequately how (as Matthew Arnold said, less truthfully, of Shakespeare) "self-schooled, self-scanned, self-honored, self-secure, he walked on earth unguessed at."

Professor Woodberry does not analyze; he synthesizes. He patterns order out of the chaos of Emerson's multitudinous imaginings. He accomplishes what Emerson himself despaired of: he reveals a system—clear, compact, and in most ways self-consistent—beneath the darts and indirections of the poet's moral mind. Emerson's message is here for the first time formulated.

Starting from the poet's central intuition—"I am; therefore God is"—the critic, with Cartesian clearness, expounds the interrelation of his dominant ideas and pursues them to their practicalization in his stimulating counsels. The mental feat of this accomplishment is a marvel of constructive criticism.

The only defect of Professor Woodberry's critical constructiveness is a corollary of its excellence. Herein the law of compensation shows itself inexorable. Emerson's mind was unusual in this: it was great *because of* its lack of system,—not *in spite of* it. It was, not a reasonable mind; it was intuitional. Its workings were Hebraic, not Hellenic. Reduce his thoughts to order, and you disrobe him of his shining vestments. A first-rate Hebrew prophet becomes a second-rate Greek philosopher. When Matthew Arnold lectured in America, he said of Emerson: "He is the friend and aider of those who would live in the spirit. All the points in thinking which are necessary for this purpose he takes; but he does not combine them into a system, or present them as a regular philosophy. Combined into a system by a man with the requisite talent for this kind of thing, they would be less useful than as Emerson gives them to us; and the man with the talent so to systemize them would be less impressive than Emerson." These words set forth the only adverse criticism that may be advanced against Professor Woodberry's truly admirable study.

If it seem too subtly paradoxical to suggest that a greater service might have been rendered to readers of Emerson by a critic who did not understand him so completely, the writer of this review can offer only the excuse that he agrees with Emerson that in contemplating spiritual truths abandonment and ecstasy of mind are wiser than the sweet reasonableness that Matthew Arnold was wont to praise. Professor Woodberry's study is a triumph of sweet reasonableness; but it is planned without abandonment and executed without ecstasy. "I own," the critic says, "that I have little intellectual sympathy with him in any way." Sympathy is the only thing that is lacking in this reasoned synthesis of Emerson's ejaculations; but, in the presence of a great mind, sympathy is more to be desired than understanding.

"Many things," said Sir Thomas Browne, "are true in divinity which are neither inducible by reason nor confirmable by sense." Many of the radiant thoughts of Emerson are not in-

ducible by reason. To formulate his message is to rob him of his truth. The intellect alone cannot comprehend the mysteries of the spirit,—or what's religion for? Emerson's message was not philosophical, but religious. Professor Woodberry's biography is not religious, but philosophical. By all means let us be grateful for a study so satisfying to the intellect. Let us use it as a chart of the heavens wherein the thoughts of Emerson are set as stars. Let us not forget that it is the stars themselves that have the only real existence and that the cosmography upon whose threads we string them is merely a figment of abstraction.

CLAYTON HAMILTON.

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“ABELARD AND HELOISE.”\*

WE have heard a good deal of late concerning a general revival of interest in poetic plays which is supposed to be taking place, or about to take place. It cannot be denied that the signs of some such movement have multiplied rapidly during the past year or two. Never have actual attempts to present such plays been so largely encouraged by American theatregoers. The box-office is no longer so emphatic in its verdict against poetry; and the box-office is in the nature of things the court of last appeal. The twenty per cent. of playgoers whom Mr. Gosse some time ago postulated as not disposed to take their theatre simply as a dose of morphia or a glass of champagne, really seems inclined to assert itself. Only a few poetic plays in English have actually been produced so far, and they have not set the world on fire. But they have been worth hearing, and they have been heard with a readiness which speaks well for the future. It means, for one thing, the decline of the closet drama, that melancholy refuge of defeated heroics. The drama is for the stage. Even if you are of those who had rather read a play than see it presented, your interest in it turns upon its actable quality. You simply prefer to be your own stage-manager, your own actor or group of actors, your own scene-painter and property man; and to produce plays for yourself upon the complaisant boards of your own mind. If the play is not fit to be acted the chances are you read it as poetry, not as drama, unless, as sometimes happens, your closet play fills for you a kind of left-handed dramatic function by sug-

\* “Abelard and Heloise.” By Ridgely Torrence. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.